THE

WELSH FREEHOLDER's VINDICATION

OF

His *LETTER*

TO THE

RIGHT REVEREND

SAMUEL, LORD BISHOP of St. DAVID's.

Price 1s. 6d.

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OF

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SAMUEL, LORD BISHOP of ST. DAVID's,

IN

REPLY TO A LETTER

FROM

A CLERGYMAN OF THAT DIOCESE;

TOGETHER WITH

STRICTURES on the ſaid LETTER.

" After the way which they call hereſy, ſo worſhip I the God of
" my Fathers." PAUL.

" If TRUTH, with her awful preſence, ſhould ſpread conſternation
" through the ſanctuary of ſuperſtition, and caſt the Idol-Deity to the
" ground; ſome PRIEST, more wakeful than his fellows, will *riſe up*
" *early on the morrow*, and with officious hand, will lift up the poor
" helpleſs proſtrate DAGON, and reſtore him to *his place*."

WAKEFIELD on Baptiſm, p. 3.

Αλλο δέ τοι ἱερέω, Ϛὺ δ' ἐνί φρεσί βάλλεο Ϛῆσιν,
Οὔ θην ϗδ' αὐτὸς δηρὸν βίη,——

ILIAD lib. xvi. l. 852.

PRINTED FOR J. JOHNSON, N°. 72, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD
LONDON; AND J. ROSS, CAERMARTHEN.

M DCC XCI.

THE

PREFACE.

THE moſt reſpectable of the Engliſh Clergy, thoſe who enter moſt fully into the true ſpirit of their ſacred profeſſion, feel many a pang from circumſtances that little affect their ambitious and mercenary brethren. Eccleſiaſtical preferment-hunters, and thoſe who ruſh into the ſanctuary of God merely for the ſake of a living, to which they are encouraged to look, are unacquainted with thoſe reſtraints which give the moſt exquiſite pain to the man of true honour, and manly ſentiment.

How afflictive it is to prevaricate with conſcience, and to trifle with the moſt ſolemn engagements, is only known to thoſe who are Chriſtians upon enquiry, and who are in the habit of cheriſhing a regard for truth. The embarraſsments of theſe perſons make little impreſſion on the higher orders alſo of the Clergy. The company which they keep, and the affairs in which they are principally engaged, have a tendeney to make them think

lightly of the difficulties, and to turn a deaf ear to the ſupplications, of their inferior brethren.

Indeed, were our Prelates and Dignitaries ever ſo well diſpoſed to relieve the diſtreſſes of theſe worthy characters, yet ſo unenlightened, ſo uninformed, are the great bulk of the people, and ſo ſtrong their prejudices in favour of the Common Prayer, in its preſent form, that all the power and influence (great as we have lately ſeen them to be) of theſe elevated perſonages, would be ſcarcely ſufficient to effectuate a reform of our public ſervice.—The fear of any diſturbance being occaſioned by ſuch a meaſure, and a ſuſpicion that improvements in the *doctrines* might open the eyes of the public to diſcover thoſe that are wanted in the *civil conſtitution* of the Church, are ſufficient, amply ſufficient, yea and more than ſufficient, to deter a body of men, above all others ambitious for temporal honours and emoluments, from taking a ſingle ſtep for the relief of theſe oppreſſed perſons. Let the people of Britain be once made ſenſible of the propriety and expediency of farther refor-

reformation in religion, and the point will ſoon be carried.

To ſecond the wiſhes of theſe venerable men, by exciting a ſpirit of enquiry into religious ſubjects, by endeavouring to incline his readers to a change in our forms of public worſhip, by attempting to remove their attachment to ſcholaſtic jargon, and their diſlike to a ſcriptural liturgy, and a ſcriptural creed, the *Welſh Freeholder* regards as by no means unworthy of a good citizen, and a good Chriſtian.

Perſuaded as he is that Truth is the only foundation of religion, virtue, and happineſs, he declares himſelf an enemy to all doctrines, profeſſed by Churchmen or Diſſenters, which wiſe and enlightened men have *proved* to be contradictory to reaſon. Convinced as he is that to bring the mind to ſubmit to a long and abſurd creed, is an attempt as impracticable as it would be uſeleſs; regarding alſo that which contains the feweſt articles, if firmly believed and practiſed, as abundantly ſufficient for every purpoſe of piety and virtue; he

he thinks it his duty, on every opportunity, to declare hoſtilities againſt thoſe dogmas which confound the human underſtanding, to try how far his humble efforts can recommend to the world the unadulterated doctrines of Chriſtianity, and to appear among the friends, though the loweſt in rank, of that cauſe, which has at different times ſeverally engaged the labours of an Eraſmus, a Grotius, a Newton, a Locke, a le Clerc, an Emlyn, a Clarke, and a Lardner.

Regarding this cauſe with perhaps too ſanguine expectations of its ſucceſs, it is with joy and pleaſure the Welſh Freeholder has juſt received intelligence, that a new *Unitarian Society, for promoting religious knowledge and virtue, by the diſtribution of books*, is about to be eſtabliſhed in London on the moſt reſpectable footing;—an inſtitution whence the greateſt benefits may be expected to ariſe to the intereſts of true Chriſtianity.

THE

THE

WELSH FREEHOLDER's VINDICATION.

Reverend Sir,

AS you profeſs yourſelf a Clergyman, and I have no reaſon to queſtion your claim to that title, I beg leave to addreſs you as ſuch, and humbly to preſent you, or rather the public through you, with a few obſervations on the notice with which you have been pleaſed to honour my Letter to the Biſhop of St. David's.

In the Preface to a ſecond edition of that Letter, which has been printed in compliance with the loud demands of the public, is contained a brief defence of thoſe parts of it, againſt which cavils had been raiſed.

As the Biſhop had indulged himſelf in the liberal uſe of the moſt contemptuous language with reſpect to a perſon whoſe writings I moſt highly value, and from which I have derived the greateſt benefits; (and in this declaration there are numbers, I am confident, of the firſt reſpectability, who will join me;)—as he had, in a manner as groſs as it was unjuſtifiable, called his learning in queſtion, and dared to depreciate thoſe diſcoveries which have

rendered

rendered the name of PRIESTLEY illuſtrious in every civilized country, and will tranſmit it with undiminiſhed luſtre to far diſtant ages of the world; I did not expect that he or his friends would rave ſo furiouſly, as from the ſpecimen you have given us they ſeem to do, at a few free ſtrictures on his ſcientific and literary ſervices; more eſpecially, as the Biſhop muſt know they might have been made to appear, conſiſtently with juſtice, ſtill leſs advantageous, had particulars been exhibited, and the hiſtory of his literary proceedings been rigorouſly ſcrutinized.

But, Sir, what and if the Biſhop was miſrepreſented, why not clear him? If men of no merit were extolled, why not expoſe their pretenſions? This would have been more politic than to ſubject yourſelf to the ſuſpicion, that you were conſcious the Letter you ſo ſtudiouſly affect to vilify, contained home truths, which made you ſmart, and which you could not anſwer; that it threw difficulties in your way which you were not able to obviate; and that therefore you were determined to make out by abuſe and obloquy, what you could not accompliſh by fair argument and calm reaſoning.

In no other way can I account for your repreſenting the *Welſh Freeholder*'s Letter as a moſt offenſive and monſtrous object. Though the picture you draw of it be ugly, and ſuch as may make our neighbours diſcontinue to fondle and dandle it as a plaything, yet there is no apparent reaſon why they

they ſhould not ſtill approve of it, view and examine it on every ſide; for really the heterogeneous and oppoſite qualities you have deſcribed it as uniting in itſelf, muſt render it an object of public curioſity. Pray, Sir, examine carefully your *glaſſes*, and ſee whether they convey to you a true *phantaſm*; it may be they have the property of repreſenting objects the very reverſe of what they actually are, and ſhould only be worn when you are endeavouring to diſcover the Chriſtian ſpirit and ſuperlative excellences of a famed prelate.

But to be ſerious, for you ſeem to hint, rather broadly, that I am very aukward at raillery: I will try whether I can command more of your reſpect, and give you leſs offence, in the grave ſtile of writing. I fear, Sir, you were much hurried by paſſion, and thus thrown greatly off your guard, when you penned the effuſions with which I have juſt been amuſing myſelf. I am apprehenſive you have not that command of temper, ſo eſſentially requiſite in a buſineſs of this kind, or you would not have raked together ſuch a quantity of filth to throw at your opponent.

Leſt you ſhould think I am not doing you juſtice, let us now engage in the diſagreeable employment of ſurveying what you had collected together, thoſe ſcurrilities in every page of your book, in flinging which at me you muſt have tired yourſelf.—You ſo belabour your antagoniſt, that you allow him not a moment to breathe and look about him.—

From

From reading your book, one would conclude, that you were writing purpoſely for thoſe with whom groundleſs defamation would ſupply the want of argument, and confident aſſertions be taken for a complete refutation.

You tell your readers, that *my Letter* is "vague, "flimſy, and illuſory,—a ſhadow,—offering nothing "to the underſtanding and to the touch,"—as "giving to the ſenſe the impreſſion of undefiled "uglineſs, and of inoffenſive hoſtility,"—as "an "apartment connected with a lumber-room of "notes,"—"filled with diſorderly rubbiſh,"—"*conceived* in the dioceſe of St. David's"—"the "homely *manufacture* of Wales"—defiled by "the "dirtineſs of inſinuation," and "rendered ghaſtly "by the poverty of a ſneer," &c. &c. Whatever the *original* may be, I will venture to ſay, a greater curioſity than the *picture* never appeared in this dioceſe, or in any other.

Of *myſelf*, the object of your virulent invective, you ſay, that I am poſſeſſed of "a heart of turbu- "lence, with a hand of imbecility"—as preſenting "a mortifying exhibition of our corrupt and weak "nature." You perceive, Sir, how unhappily you loſt your temper, before you got through the firſt page; we need not wonder then to find you quite outrageous, ere you reach the concluſion of your work. I proceed in the taſk of bringing together your ſcattered beauties; in ſearch of which you ſeem to have racked your brain, and to have ranſacked

the Engliſh language. The variety and plenty in which we meet them, do you credit as an inhabitant of Cambria; and if you be furniſhed with ſuch a profuſion of terms for every other ſtile, as for the ſtile of abuſe, you muſt be poſſeſſed of a wonderful copia. But perhaps this is your fort.

To go on; you repreſent me as "the conventicle "and field-preacher's champion"—"more ſtrongly "attached to party than to truth,"—"dealing in "varniſh that does not brighten, and daub that "does not ſully;"—a panegyriſt whoſe "enmity "and miſchief" may hurt "my party"—"of very "limited intercourſe with my ſpecies"*—"ſport-"ing profeſſions of thankfulneſs"—"poſſeſſing ſkill "in conferring immortality on a profitable calum-"ny"—"a party zealot,"—"having my expreſſions "honoured by your uſing them," (a way in which it is my intention to honour you)—"bringing for-"ward tranſactions in a ſhape to deceive,"—joining with others in ſhedding "a pitileſs ſhower of "abuſe and defamation"—"exerciſing my bad "paſſions." They are ſo thick, that I am quite tired with picking them up. I leave you to finiſh the catalogue. I aſk you, Sir, does this view of your ſcurrilities pleaſe you? You have no mean hand at fabricating them. Believe me, they would not have diſgraced the Warburtonian ſchool, when in the zenith of its ſway.

This ſtring may divert my readers, as it has diverted myſelf. You, Sir, ought to be affected by

* Vide note A.

a view

a view of it in a different manner. You have aſſumed the character of a *Clergyman*, and I have, no doubt that you are one; of a miniſter of the goſpel of peace; of the ſervant of a maſter whoſe precept it was, "*love you enemies; bleſs them that* "*curſe you; do good to them that hate you.*" Would it not have been more becoming, to have tried the effects of ſalutary admonition and inſtruction, inſtead of thus ſtorming, and raving, and praying, like the revengeful diſciples, that fire might deſcend from heaven to conſume your adverſary. This, though it ought not to be, is in character, as to the generality of the aſpiring part of your profeſſion. To teach and inſtruct the people, is a part of the Clergyman's duty that is almoſt grown obſolete and unfaſhionable. A plan of gaining preferment more ſure and compendious is now adopted. To preach and write down the ſpirit of enquiry, to truckle to their lay and eccleſiaſtical ſuperiors, and to be active at elections, are methods far more ſucceſsful.

Will you be pleaſed to inform me, Sir, in what ſenſe you deſigned that the expreſſions we have been conſidering ſhould be regarded? Did you mean them as figures wherewith to adorn your compoſition? or are they ſo many axioms and poſtulates, which you muſt be allowed to take for granted, before you can make good what your work is intended to prove? But a curious paſſage ſuggeſts to me, that you uſed them as *faggots*. This paſſage I ſhall quote.

In

" In the Unitarian Calendar, it ſhall not be my " fault if you are not diſtinguiſhed as a ſaint, or " perhaps as a *martyr*." Theſe elegant phraſes with which you ply your adverſary, would ſeem to be deſigned for the *auto de fè* you are now preparing. Having bound your victim to the ſtake, having dreſſed him in a habit ornamented with the pictures of all the devils in hell, and having practiſed every artifice to enflame the paſſions of the ſpectators, your faggots* are made to fly briſkly; when your ſtock is exhauſted, you kindle the fire, the flame ſpreads around him, and the miſcreant is conſumed in the blaze of the Biſhop's virtues. Your holy vengeance ſtops not here; it proceeds inhumanly to inſult his aſhes, and on his ſad remains to ſtamp eternal infamy. Not once tempting the wretch to recant by the offer of a pardon, you outſtrip in fervent zeal all your predeceſſors, who burned the bodies to ſave the ſouls of men.

Pleaſantry apart; I ſuppoſe you intended by theſe abuſive terms, to wound your adverſary's ſenſibility. But alas! ſir, you have unhappily miſcarried.—You dealt them in ſuch quantities, and with ſo unſparing a hand, that no one can doubt they came from one determined to caſt as much dirt as he was able, in hopes that ſome of it would adhere; but they are like ſtucco mixed up by ſome unſkilled artiſt, which, though it ſticks cloſely together, adheres not to the wall, with which it was intended it ſhould

* Vide note B.

unite,

unite, ſeparates in one entire maſs, and falls to the ground, to the great diſgrace of the artificer.

Your adverſary, without making pretenſions to much philoſophy, can bear to be cenſured in company with the members of the Royal Society, with "the Vulcano-men, the cullers of ſimples, and "their circumnavigating preſident," thoſe men "who have exiled ſcience from the precincts of "the Royal Society.*"

Luckleſs damſel! thus exiled, why not betake thyſelf to the philoſophic vale of Abergwily, and carry with thee eternal renown to thy Cambrian votaries, attended and cheriſhed by whoſe filial care, thou wilt again recover thy faded beauty?—Let the tranſactions that iſſue from a new ſociety, of which let our Prelate be preſident, and our Clergyman be ſecretary, overflow with recondite lore; while the tranſactions of the Royal Society in London are filled with ſtupid details of the experiments of ſuch *artificers* as Prieſtley, Cavendiſh, Kirwan, Ingenhouſz, Watſon, Watt, Withering, and Milner; or the trifling electrical phænomena obſerved by a Lane, a Nicholſon, and a Cavallo; the low computations of a Waring, a Maſkelyne, a Morgan, and a Le Roy; and the reveries of a Herſchell. Believe me, Sir, had I been permitted to chooſe the perſons with whom to ſhare abuſe, I ſhould have wiſhed for no others than thoſe whom you have ſelected.

* Vide note C.

You

You ſay, that it is paying your brother Clergy no very extraordinary compliment, to ſet them down as judges of merit, equally competent with the members of the Royal Society. Pray, Sir, conſider what you have ſaid. You are not acquainted with the deſcription of perſons who conſtitute this Society. Scarcely would you have made a declaration ſo preſumptuous and unqualified, had you known, that among them are to be reckoned ſome of the principal of your Clergy, particularly Cambridge-men, of the ableſt among the Diſſenting Miniſters, and of the greateſt among the lay ornaments of your Church. Partial as I acknowledge myſelf to be to the Principality, I am not quite ſo blinded as to believe, that there can be a deſcription of men, ſituated at ſo great a diſtance from literary and ſcientific communications, (no, ſir, not even the Clergy, a great proportion of whom have not enjoyed the benefit of an Univerſity education,) who deſerve to be ſet in competition with the moſt enlightened body of men, in this or any other country; with a ſociety, the reputation of which is ſuch, in many places abroad, as to entitle it to peculiar privileges.

You know that in this changeable world we are ſubject to reverſes; but there is no ſituation ſo bad, that a worſe cannot be imagined. That you muſt allow to be my caſe. I congratulate myſelf, under my preſent heavy load of detraction, that I find myſelf in the company of "dictionary makers," "venders of periodical criticiſm," and "artificers

" of experiments," and the ſeveral non-deſcripts included between Prieſtley and Wakefield.

You who have diſplayed ſo much critical ſkill and ability in the Letter before me, can perhaps ſay, how much higher, in the temple of fame, the ſtatue of a writer of notes ſhould ſtand, than the ſtatue of "a dictionary-maker;" of one who writes anſwers with a view to preferment, than that of "a vender of periodical criticiſm;" and which ſhould have the moſt elevated ſituation, the ſtatue of an " artificer of experiments," or the ſtatue of an artificer of no experiments.

The defamation of a man ſo loſt to all ſenſe of decency, as in the lump to vilify the members of the firſt philoſophical ſociety in the world, with its preſident at their head; authors of eſtabliſhed reputation, whoſe labours have acquired immortality to themſelves, and rendered laſting ſervices to the world; philoſophers, naturaliſts, and ſcholars; falls little ſhort of direct praiſe. Your lance, by this bad management, went not with ſufficient force to ſtick itſelf in your adverſary's ſhield, that he might have the pleaſure of extracting it; it falls of itſelf; and ſo ſlight is the impreſſion it made, that the point on which it ſtruck is not to be diſcovered.

Inſatiable of cenſures, my Lords of Oxford, Bangor, Ely, &c. muſt not eſcape without their ſhare. You muſt, however, permit me to regard thoſe quondam Biſhops of St. David's, whom you treat ſo freely, as conſulting better than he who now fills tha

that ſee, the welfare and ſecurity of your church, notwithſtanding all his buſtle and meddling.

Having, I truſt, ſatisfied you as to the effect of your abuſe of *me*, I ſhall next conſider your treatment of my *publication*. You ſay, that as a compoſition, "the worth of this kind which it poſſeſſed, "was inſufficient to procure it admiſſion into a "provincial newſpaper." This, ſir, is falſe.—"This," to honour one of your expreſſions, "is to "march to aſſertion through the breach of truth." What you aſcribed to want of compoſition, you ſhould have looked for, and you would have found it, in the bigotry of your own party. You repreſent it as ſo humble as to be placed beneath criticiſm, and charge it with a general abſence of literary merit. Pleaſe, ſir, to remember, that it was deſigned for a newſpaper, and that it only made its way to the preſs, as a ſeparate publication, on the moſt urgent ſolicitations of one who poſſeſſes a higher claim to candour and moral worth, than the utmoſt ſtretch of charity would lead me to conclude falls to your ſhare. Say what you pleaſe of its literary merit, and you will not affect its author. Literary merit was not his object. Humble as he is very willing to allow his powers to be, he reſpects them too much, to exert them to the utmoſt when writing for a newſpaper. He has too ſtrong a ſenſe of propriety, to laviſh the time and ſtudy which he has ever found finiſhed compoſitions to require, on the creature of a day. He profeſſed and apologiſed

for his predilection for plainneſs and homelineſs of garb, and felt no apprehenſion of falling under the cenſure of any of the deſcription to which you belong. A neat elegant ſtyle, in oppoſition to one ſo inflated and ſtiff as your's, I would not be thought to undervalue, though I do not think myſelf bound, on every occaſion, even to endeavour to be perfect in this way.

To him who knows the value of time, caſes may occur, wherein it is very warrantable not to regard fine writing; and the object may ſimply be, to be underſtood. And truly, ſir, this was the object that I propoſed to myſelf. If you and your friends have derived any entertainment from your criticiſms upon it, enjoy it and welcome; a province which however hardly became you, till yourſelf had acquired a more correct and chaſte ſtyle of writing, than that which you have in the preſent inſtance choſen to adopt. Though I may have ſuffered in literary reputation, if I have ſucceeded in exciting the attention of any of my fellow citizens to important truths, and to the late diſcuſſions they have undergone, my end is completely anſwered. I did not ſet up as the inſtructor of my countrymen in any point; had I aſſumedthat character I ought to have appeared in a dreſsleſs looſe but as I aſpired at no other than the humble poſt of directing to works already publiſhed to indulge in a negligence, conſiſtent with the inferior nature of my employment, appeared to

me as in no wiſe improper. If I have been the means of bringing any among my countrymen acquainted with ſuch books as the following, viz. Lindſey's Apology, and Sequel; his Addreſs to the Young Men of the two Univerſities, in two parts; Dr. Prieſtley's Inſtitutes, his Letter to a Philoſophical Unbeliever, his Hiſtory of the Corruptions of Chriſtianity, and Tracts in controverſy with Biſhop Horſley, and his ſmaller Theological Tracts; the Theological Repoſitory; Wakefield's Enquiry; the Hints to a new Aſſociation; and the Conſiſtent Proteſtant, &c.; could I induce them to furniſh themſelves with the improved verſions of the Scriptures, that will ſpeedily be preſented to the public, I have no doubt they would deem my object to have been a worthy one, and would conſider themſelves as under greater obligations to me, who have brought theſe books to their knowledge, than to you who would wreſt them out of their hands, and make a *martyr* of me who have introduced them to their notice. To have been the means of giving riſe to effects of this ſort, would afford me a complacency far out of the reach of your petulance and ſpleen to diſturb; my mind would be tranſported with the idea of having been the inſtrument of accelerating the downfall of that ſyſtem of error and ſuperſtition, which you are ſo deſirous to prop up.

It was alſo my deſign to convince the Biſhop, that there were in his dioceſe, thoſe who were indignant at his unwarrantable treatment of men,

who are an ornament to the Chriſtian name and profeſſion; that there were thoſe who had ſpirit to reſent the inſults, which his oſtentatious zeal had hurried him to throw out under ſeveral forms.

You have now all the aſſiſtance I can give you towards learning "the eſtimate and character" of my publication. You indeed, ſir, have made but a poor uſe for the *public*, whatever you may have done for *yourſelf*, of this affair of mine, of this "*thing* of challenge and of inſult." Your readers have little reaſon to be obliged to you for this "for-"ward zeal," which you ſo much blame in me, but which you are ſo careful to imitate, and which impelled you to array yourſelf ſo formidably with buckler, and ſhield, and lance, to attack "a *thing* "which offers nothing to the underſtanding and to "the ſenſe," "a *thing* of inoffenſive hoſtility," "of "undefined uglineſs," and of courſe what could do no harm; ſo that taking your own account of it for the true one, you ſeem to have been typified in a remarkable manner, by the redoubtable knight Don Quixote, when once on a time he made his formidable attack on a windmill. Had you made the beſt poſſible uſe of this Letter of mine, which you ſo violently condemn, finding that a leading deſign of it was to recommend certain books which you deemed prejudicial, and which you would therefore endeavour to exclude from the country, you ſhould have undertaken to point out their evil tendency, and the ſources whence the prejudice

would

would ariſe. You might have accounted on your own principles for the growing numbers of Unitarians. You might have ſtated what had been attempted by Mr. Lindſey, and Dr. Prieſtley, and ſhewn their want of ſucceſs. Here you would, no doubt, have introduced with advantage the exploits of your admired hero, the great champion of the Church. You might have ſhewn, that his victories had not only been trumpeted by intereſted prieſts, echoing his own aſſuming vaunts, and rewarded at the inſtigation of diſſipated courtiers, uninformed in theſe matters, but that he had been graced by the fame which the approbation of the impartial and the judicious confer. From this manner of proceeding, your readers would have derived information, and I ſhould have ſtood a better chance of being ſet right, or have had a fairer opportunity of convincing you of your error; and you would have gained more credit to yourſelf, than reſults from the abuſe, you ſo plentifully deal out to one party, and the panegyric which you heap on the other; "varniſh," ſir, "that does not "brighten, and daub that does not ſully." The men from whom you detract, ſtill hold up their heads in ſociety, and receive the homage and reſpect of the worthy and the wiſe, notwithſtanding the attempts of your ſturdy champion to overwhelm their credit and reputation. The heart to conceive, and the hand to execute, are, as you obſerve, different things.

On

On the merits of the Diſſenters, as a part of the body politic, let a quotation from Mr. Hume put you to ſhame; on our turbulence let this be a comment; ſays this hiſtorian, certainly no ways partial to us, "ſo abſolute" (ſpeaking of the arbitrary conduct of Elizabeth) "was the authority of the crown, "that the precious ſpark of liberty had been kindled and was preſerved by the puritans alone; and "it was to this ſect, whoſe principles appear ſo "frivolous, and habits ſo ridiculous, that the "Engliſh owe the whole freedom of their conſtitution." Hume's Hiſt. vol. v. p. 189. A ſenſible writer, quoting this paſſage, thus comments on it: 'Whilſt every enlarged and liberal mind 'rejoices in the conſideration, that the cauſe of 'civil and religious liberty is, in this age, better 'underſtood, and more generally patronized, than 'in former times, the Proteſtant Diſſenters are 'peculiarly entitled to triumph in the recollection, 'that theſe two moſt invaluable bleſſings have been 'preſerved and handed down to their fellow-ſubjects, in conſequence of the firm adherence of their 'forefathers to the cauſe of liberty and truth, both 'civil and religious.'

The fondneſs of a father, it is probable, led you to reſcue from oblivion the Letter of *Fannius*. In this turgid epiſtle I can diſcover nothing, this predilection excepted, that could thus have entitled it to diſtinction. It only informs us that the Biſhop's Letter was a private and not a circular one; which

only

only impeaches the cowardice of the writer, while it neither removes nor palliates the indecency of the act. Why the ſpiritual father ſhould be warranted in taking ſuch a liberty with one of his ſons, and not with all, you, ſir, muſt explain. Beſides, the language appeared well to become a public edict, while it was ill adapted for a private letter. Here allow me, ſir, to advert to our conduct with regard to Mr. Fox; let this great man explain it, and not "a party zealot like yourſelf." Our late application to him, he confeſſed, flattered him greatly, as it contained an unqueſtionable proof, that a very reſpectable body of men, who had differed from him moſt widely in ſome political opinions, gave him full credit for honeſty of principle, and goodneſs of intentions; or they never would have entruſted him with the management of their cauſe. For their deſertion of him the Diſſenters feel no ſhame; they were hurt at his coalition with a man, whoſe adminiſtration they, together with Mr. Fox, had regarded with the deepeſt averſion. They conſidered the India-Bill as ſetting up a new power in the State, and they took part with the monarch; they diſapproved of his principle, and therefore withdrew from him their ſupport. The Diſſenters, unlike you and your "brethren of the gown," are attached not to men, but to meaſures. They are not to be *put upon** countenancing what they diſapprove; and hence they are very contented to lie under your

* Vide note D.

charge,

charge, of unſteadineſs of attachment, while they ſee not how it can be removed, without ſacrificing their integrity. From Mr. Fox they have ſince very generally differed on the queſtion of the Regency; but ſtill, with the moſt enlightened and beſt-informed of their fellow-ſubjects, they admire his open and manly conduct; and would go, in ſupporting him, to the utmoſt limit that is conſiſtent with their principle of a ſteady veneration for the public good. They fancy, and they rejoice in it, that they ſee in him a mind that is gradually opening to the beſt and moſt extenſive political views, which he adopts, not on the authority of any man or ſet of men, but which, by the diſcernment that ſo eminently diſtinguiſhes him, he traces to their true principles, while his tranſcendent genius with eaſe ſurveys all their probable operations. What has been tranſacted on the continent and in America, muſt, on a mind like his, have had this effect; while the long oppoſition, in which he has been and ſtill is engaged at home, muſt form him to that political wiſdom, which will make his country one day look up to him as its greateſt bleſſing, under the character of a truly wiſe and patriotic miniſter; who, overlooking his eaſe and his intereſt, will ſet himſelf in earneſt to improve the condition of his fellow-ſubjects, by bringing about the reformation of our decayed conſtitution.

From this pleaſing ſubject, I again return to your complaints. I cannot ſee why we ſhould be blamed for

for joining with you, againſt what was deemed a common enemy. Let thoſe Diſſenters, who profeſs "friendſhip" to your Church, make good their characters to conſiſtency: with a defence of theſe I have no concern. It is a crime of which I reſolve never to be guilty, while the Church continues to be as corrupt as it now is. Individuals in your Church, in the Church of Rome, and in every other Church, however badly conſtituted, that are honeſt and well-intentioned, I ſhall reſpect; and ſhould be ſorry to be outdone by them in candour and good offices. Such, ſir, is my dullneſs, that I cannot for my life find out the cauſe why our adherence to the houſe of Brunſwick ſhould be leſs meritorious, becauſe, like other ſubjects, we ſhould have ſuffered, had the Pretender prevailed, any more than I can underſtand why the diſloyalty and open rebellion of many members of your Church ſhould be thought leſs heinous, becauſe they were ſo diſintereſted as to ſupport the cauſe of one, known to be hoſtile both to their religion and to their liberty. Here, in order to be even with you, I ought to recount the ſervices which the eſtabliſhed Clergy have rendered to their country, by their zeal in preaching up paſſive obedience and non-reſiſtance, the divine right of kings, and the duty of ſubjects to yield implicit ſubmiſſion. Good people! it is for no fault of theirs, it is from no want of their concurrent aid, that we have not a government as arbitrary as that of Turkey; always loyal when

when there is no pretender in the caſe; courageous when there is no danger; and decided when there is no intereſt at ſtake. I do not include all Churchmen under this deſcription, but thoſe bleſſed high ones, a double portion of whoſe ſpirit ſeems to have been transfuſed into you and Biſhop Horſley; nor do I mean to ſay, that the Church has always acted this part, but that this has been its general bent. But I forbear: the preſent age may, and poſterity will read all this, and much more, in the impartial page of hiſtory.

Next comes our "literary induſtry," which you chooſe to call "ſpirit of attack." What does this ſpirit of attack indicate? A conſciouſneſs of the goodneſs of our cauſe. Not, I grant you, that we think it impoſſible we ſhould be wrong, but that we think ourſelves to be right: if we thought otherwiſe, and acted as we do, we muſt be made up of materials different from thoſe which enter into the compoſition of men in general. It argues then, at leaſt, that we ſeriouſly believe our cauſe to be good. What, I would aſk, can recommend it to us, but an opinion of its ſuperior excellence? You have other and different ties, to bind you down to certain articles of faith, and forms of worſhip, which would palliate your devotedneſs, did you not carry yourſelves with ſuch overbearing inſolence towards thoſe, who, having not the ſame reaſons, treat them as they deſerve.

You

You ſeem not to be pleaſed with thoſe among us, who are "dictionary compilers," "venders of "periodical criticiſm," and "artificers of experi-"ments." Our offence, as to theſe matters, lies, I preſume, in your eſteem, not ſo much in our engaging "the attention of Europe;" as in this, that our dictionaries, our articles of periodical criticiſm, and the details of our experiments, have diminiſhed that profound reverence with which the people have been wont to regard their Clergy; that they make them indiſpoſed to admit three to be no more than one, and one to be equal to three; leſs inclined to adopt the idea, that He, who is the Creator of the univerſe, compared with which our globe is not a perceptible atom, ſhould become an infant, be ſubject to every human infirmity, and at length be put to death by his creatures. Having ſeen pointed out by theſe experiments, ſo many traces of the divine benevolence, they are apt to become averſe to a ſyſtem, which repreſents the Deity as reſolved upon revenge, which can only be appeaſed by the eternal miſery of the whole human race, or the ſufferings and death of a being of equal rank and dignity with himſelf. From this obnoxious tendency, works of that kind, I apprehend, are not to be exculpated; and hence to prieſts they are objects of conſiſtent hate. It is this that galls you. *Hinc illæ lachrymæ!*

You next charge us Unitarians with the "venom "of hereſy and irreligion." I muſt again remind you,

you, ſir, that hard names do but ill ſupply the want of argument. Chriſtianity itſelf was once, you know, a hereſy, as was alſo your immaculate Church; and you, ſir, puffed up as you are with the pride of orthodoxy, and perhaps pampered by its emoluments, wouldat this day be deemedin Spain as abandoned a heretic as myſelf. According to what is called hereſy, we, Unitarians, worſhip the God of our fathers. The queſtion remains to be decided, whether it be in reality a hereſy, or the true doctrine of Chriſt; and whether the tenets, to the truth of which you have *ſworn*, be ſcriptural, or, like your rites and your ceremonies, the mere devices and inventions of men. Irreligion is a ſerious reproach, and it became you to have inveſtigated, before you had fixed it on any body of men. Report ſpeaks not true, or Unitarians in general are as much diſtinguiſhed by the amiableneſs of their virtues, as by their ſuperior information and liberality. You ought to have known from fact, as well as from reaſoning, that between a long abſtruſe creed, and piety and good morals, there is no connection whatever. While the perfections of God, and the accountableneſs of man are held, all is ſafe that enlivens devotion, and that warms the heart to the love of goodneſs. A little attention would have ſhewn you, that the reaſon why men have ſo generally ſuppoſed, that good conduct can only conſiſt with the notions which they ſeverally hold,

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is to be reſolved into the aſſociation of ideas; and though you may be perſuaded ever ſo ſtrongly to the contrary, there appears to me to be no more connection between the belief of the Trinity, and the practice of virtue, than there is between the ſight of a trunk and good dancing; though I am ſenſible ſome perſons would be leſs virtuous, were they to diſbelieve it; juſt as Mr. Locke tells us that a young gentleman, who had learnt to dance exceedingly well in a room in which there was an old trunk, could never perform except there was a trunk placed in the room where the dance was held. Opinions in themſelves ſhould never be condemned as criminal, when fairly acquired and honeſtly profeſſed; though the debaſing influence of thoſe that are wrong, ought moſt ſtudiouſly to be avoided.—The iniquity lies in enjoining upon one man the opinions of another, and tempting him, by honours and emoluments, to profeſs them outwardly, while in his heart he holds the very reverſe. For being the cauſe of much of this ſort of double dealing and inſincerity, your Church has a great deal to anſwer; and if it perſeveres in keeping up the preſent rigid terms of admiſſion, its guilt of this kind will go on to accumulate in an increaſing progreſſion.

You would have obliged the Unitarians, no doubt, had you made good againſt them the charge of *hereſy*. Though, ſir, they pay not implicit deference to the propoſitions contained in the Nicene creed; which, had they been more conſonant

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to the Chriſtian verity than they in reality are, ought never to have been ſet up as ſtandards of faith to the Chriſtian world, as being ſanctioned by a meeting, the proceedings of which every man of learning knows to have been notoriouſly irregular and diſgraceful;—though they reject with contempt, the arrant nonſenſe and unchriſtian bigotry of the Pſeudo-Athanaſius; yet they aſſent, as fully as you do, to that creed, which in your ſervice book is called the Apoſtles;—they believe all which you, in your diſputes with unbelievers, choſe to bring forward as the Chriſtian doctrine, viz. that there is one God, and one Mediator betweeu God and man, the man Chriſt Jeſus;—that the Deity is of himſelf, and not induced by any thing out of himſelf, ever ready to diſpenſe pardon to all thoſe who by repentance and amendment render themſelves meet for its reception;—that his clemency extends to all but thoſe who would abuſe it;—that ſalvation is within the reach of all, and that none are by unalterable decrees deprived of its benefits. Why theſe ſimple, beautiful tenets, which compoſed the creed of the firſt Chriſtians, and of the great body of them in the time even of Tertullian, (though the original ſimplicity of the Goſpel had been much corrupted by the philoſophiſing Biſhops;) which was again revived by the moſt learned among the reformers from Popery; which has derived luſtre from the friendlineſs diſcovered towards it by Grotius, from the open avowal of it by Locke Newton

Newton, Le Clerc, Haynes, Lardner, &c. in times paſt, not to mention the great names that adorn the profeſſion of it in our own; why theſe ſhould be branded with the name of *hereſy*, you, ſir, ſhould have ſhewn, before you ventured ſo confidently on the uſe of the term: having not done this, you can only be regarded as a *malicious petulant maligner*, who, by ill-ſounding names, ſtrives to excite prejudices in his readers againſt what he diſlikes. Yea, ſir, it would have been an employment worthy of your mighty abilities, to have ſhewn us how ſuch tenets as the following, which you once believed, or you have forſworn yourſelf, namely, that God has irreverſibly decreed the ſalvation of ſome, and as certainly appointed the eternal damnation of others; that God is unrelenting, and forgives not the offences of his penitent offſpring; that before he pardons contrite tranſgreſſors, he requires, for ſatisfaction, the ſufferings of innocence; demanding, before he conſents to ſave even a few of the human race, a victim of equal rank with himſelf; alſo, that the ſin of one man has involved in guilt the whole human race, and was ſufficient to have damned it to eternal torments; and that man of himſelf is unable to perform one ſingle good act;—how tenets ſo derogatory to the character of the Deity, that reflect ſuch diſhonour on his government, that tend ſo much to debaſe our natures, and that ſap the foundations of morality, ſhould be exclufively dignified with the name of *orthodoxy*.

I take no pleaſure in holding out to you this horrid picture, nor in ſtating the diſhonour it reflects on your ſituation; but the truth muſt not be concealed; and I wiſh it could be uttered with a voice that would penetrate every corner of the nation, and that would rouſe the people of Britain to riſe as one man, to require that the public ſervice of religion be cleanſed from theſe pollutions, which preſs hard on the conſciences of the moſt worthy among the Clergy, which drive many to infidelity, which render others indifferent to all religion, and which keep from the Church numbers, whoſe talents and whoſe weight of character would render it eminent ſervice.

"The friends of religion and order," you inform us, "ſtill conſtitute the nation." In the cant of perſons of your deſcription, religion means thoſe articles of faith, and that form of worſhip, which are eſtabliſhed by law. That the bulk of the people are attached to this, no one will diſpute. But this attachment of the majority is no proof that a religion is true; for you know, ſir, that the majority are not always in the right. If the ſuffrages of the many are to decide, idolatry, far ſurpaſſing all other religions in the number of its adherents, muſt be the true one; but if the intrinſic merits of a religion are to make good its claims, this teſt will hardly prove more favourable than the above to that to which you are attached. Indeed how in reaſon can it be expected, that a Church, ſet on foot by one of

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our monarchs who was a diſgrace to the name of a king; foſtered, during the minority of his ſucceſſor, by a perſon, who, whatever other merits he might poſſeſs, and though an Archbiſhop of Canterbury, was guilty of two acts that have tranſmitted him to poſterity as a perſecutor and a coward; and brought well nigh into the ſtate under which it exiſts at preſent, by a woman, whoſe interference in eccleſiaſtical matters was moſt arbitrary and indecent; who, in retaining ſeveral of the Romiſh ceremonies, conſulted a paſſion natural enough, but not confined to her ſex, namely, a love of ſhew and pomp; and who, it is notorious, made religion, in many inſtances, bend to policy: —that a Church, in the conſtruction of which ſuch a quantity of ſuſpicious materials (Popiſh tenets, uſages, and maxims) was uſed with no very diſcriminating hand; a Church, reared up under the management of builders every way ſo ill-qualified, as were Harry the Eighth, Cranmer, and Queen Beſs, (which it were eaſy to ſhew at large) and actuated, as it is well known they were, by motives the moſt foreign to thoſe which ought to have influenced the votaries of true religion;—that a Church, ſo circumſtanced in its origin and ſubſequent advance, ſhould labour under the greateſt blemiſhes and defects, is what might have been looked for, and what has actually taken place. Your boaſted Church-eſtabliſhment is perhaps, of all thoſe which at this time exiſt in Europe, the moſt diſtinguiſhed

by prieſtly pride and clerical negligence, the moſt hoſtile to free enquiry and the progreſs of knowledge. At no period was faith in abſurdities more inſiſted on, and the voice of calumny raiſed higher againſt thoſe who reject its dogmas. Whether this belief in them by your leaders be only a ſeeming profeſſion; a *thing* of politics, taken up to ſupport the crazy edifice, now that ſeveral pillars on which it was wont once firmly to rely, are either tottering or fallen, is a ſubject upon which, perhaps, it would be indecent publicly to indulge conjectures. Were I leſs a friend to your eſtabliſhment than you take me to be, I ſhould wiſh no more harm to befal it, than would ariſe from perſeverance in ſuch conduct; from having all its Biſhops ſuch as Horſley, and all its Clergy ſuch as yourſelf.

With regard to national churches, we ſee America flouriſh very well without any; and whether one may be ſo conſtituted, as not to infringe on the natural rights of men, ſo as to offer no ſnares to their integrity, ſo as to be no hindrance to the prevalence of truth and virtue, is a queſtion, concerning which the moſt enlightened among the friends of liberty, civil and religious, are not agreed. As to the effects of all paſt inſtitutions of this ſort, no doubt can be entertained. The hiſtory of eſtabliſhed Churches, calling themſelves Chriſtian, from their commencement to the preſent time, is the hiſtory of corporate bodies ſtriving to enſlave the minds of men, to debaſe them by ſuperſtitious practices,

believe thoſe ſincere, who, having been made acquainted with the ſyſtems upon ſyſtems of worlds which modern diſcoveries have brought to light, can for a moment harbour in their minds the ſentiment, that He, who makes and governs theſe, ſhould become an inhabitant of this world for above thirty years, exerciſe an ordinary trade, ſubject himſelf to much ſuffering from his creatures, and at length ſuffer them to put him to an ignominious death. But this is a tenet, the abſurdity of which muſt ſtrike as forcibly the natural good ſenſe of every unbiaſſed and unprejudiced mind, as it will that of the wiſeſt and moſt accompliſhed. Let the inquiſitive among the inhabitants of this dioceſe, examine impartially, and give in their deciſion, unawed by the frowns of Prieſts or Biſhops, regardleſs of their threats, and unmoved by their ſneers; and were they to be followed by the other inhabitants of Britain, orthodoxy then would have cauſe to tremble; prevalent would be the diſſatisfaction with our preſent forms, and loud would be the demands for alterations in our eſtabliſhed creeds and confeſſions.

You ſee I had well nigh totally forgot the Biſhop. Indeed, ſir, the ſubjects which your work has given me occaſion to conſider, might well put him out of my mind; to me they appear of far greater importance than any Biſhop, or even a whole bench of Biſhops. But as you make him the moſt conſpicuous figure on the canvaſs, it were not handſome to paſs him over without ſome particular attention;

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more eſpecially as I owe to his Lordſhip the pleaſure of my acquaintance with you. I muſt be permitted once more to make free with him, while I ſlightly deſcant on thoſe ſervices, on which are founded his claims to "the applauſe of Europe," and which, I grant you, we ſhall never ſucceed in drawing from him, it being an abſolute impoſſibility.

If I have ſaid or inſinuated any thing againſt his Lordſhip's *perſonal* character, it has been undeſignedly; it was with his public conduct that I was concerned; and I am not conſcious of having ſtepped out of my province; and as you bring forwards no particulars, and my recollection furniſhes me with none, I am at liberty to conſider this ſuſpicion of yours, for it is ſuch rather than a charge, as having no real foundation, but to be the mere effect of an exceſſive fondneſs for his Lordſhip. With your account of the ſentiments which his Clergy entertain of his Lordſhip I am not perfectly ſatisfied; I do not however expect to hear of their making a public diſavowal of it. Though his merits in the diſcharge of his paſtoral duties be as great as you would make them, ſtill, ſir, for the man who has made the baſis of his tranſient celebrity the detraction of diſtinguiſhed worth; who has raiſed himſelf by attempts to depreſs ſuperior eminence; who has acquired a character for great abilities by maintaining doctrines that inſult reaſon; who has in every inſtance of his interference ſet his face

practices, to fence them againſt the entrance of light by every poſſible artifice, and ever moſt buſy and active in defeating the ſchemes, and plotting againſt the happineſs and tranquility, of thoſe who would make the world more wiſe. That here and there a few prieſts may have been exemplary in the diſcharge of their paſtoral functions, and that ſome may have had their virtue improved under the influence of devotedneſs to ſuch as poſſeſſed little of it themſelves, are benefits for which we cannot acknowledge ourſelves indebted to religious eſtabliſhments, but which are rather owing to the excellent principles of what you call our *weak and corrupt nature*; yet which really in itſelf it not weak and corrupt, but is rendered ſo by the groſs and pernicious corruptions and defects of moſt exiſting conſtitutions, civil and eccleſiaſtical.

The queſtion relating to the expediency and lawfulneſs of religious eſtabliſhments, is comparatively of late date among us. Our principal writer in theſe matters, the venerable Micaiah Towgood, has contented himſelf with deſcanting on the merits of your ſingle eſtabliſhment, without adverting to the general queſtion. The deepeſt wound which the cauſe of eſtabliſhments has ever received, was inflicted by one of the ſons of your Church. Archdeacon Blackburne was the man "that diſpatched "the ſhaft to the ſeat of life." If you wiſh to be acquainted with the benefits that reſult to the world from eſtabliſhments, peruſe, ſir, the *Confeſſional*, a

book in which, if any where, "your eyes will be "opened to your own ignorance;" the author of which, poſſeſſing acuteneſs and penetration that ſeldom have been equalled, employed them moſt happily on this performance, which, to the diſgrace of your Clergy, has yet received no anſwer that is in any repute; and to fill up the breach which it has made in the ramparts of the ſanctuary, is an undertaking that will not, I preſume, be courted by the great repairer of our Welſh Churches, or by his humble imitator. Never were the advocates of any cauſe reduced to ſuch wretched ſhifts. The defences of your eſtabliſhment, which have of late been made by its ſons, are a ſcandal to all ſerious Chriſtians. They have been conducted on principles, which would equally juſtify idolatry in China, Mahomediſm in Turkey, Popery in Spain, and even Preſbyterianiſm (to you, I ſuppoſe, the moſt obnoxious of all) in Scotland and Holland.* This bleſſed ground, which was, I believe, firſt ſtarted by Hobbes, unleſs it be that Hooker leſs openly availed himſelf of it, has of late without ſcruple been taken up by your Clergy; but, unhappy people! ſuch in regard to argument and reaſon is their pitiable ſtate, that even this fails them; the caſe of Ireland where the Preſbyterians are twice, and the Roman Catholicks three or four times as numerous as the members of your Church, renders this ground diſgraceful, as it is untenable.

* Vide note E.

Th

The note which perhaps has given you moſt offence, though you only hint at it, is that in which I propoſed the abolition of the Church eſtabliſhment in Wales. Judging from the facts there mentioned, it ſtruck me very forcibly, that in the principality the expence of it might be ſaved. Being, ſir, one of thoſe who in every concern are advocates for fair dealing, and who like to ſee that for every penny laid out a pennyworth be given, it appeared to me ſomewhat incongruous that this poor country ſhould be drained of ſo many thouſands, while ſo little benefit accrued to the inhabitants, in the way of religious inſtruction.

You contemptuouſly repreſent me as the "conventicle and field-preachers' champion." Of this character, ſir, I am not aſhamed. Of the eccentricities of theſe men of good intentions I am not the advocate; but as diffuſing good principles, and promoting good morals, among a claſs of people who much ſtand in need of this attention, theſe deſpiſed men appear in my eye far more reſpectable, as being more uſeful, than the indolent haughty corps to which you belong, conſiſting in general of individuals uninformed in their profeſſional duties, and of others, who, though they may be acquainted with them, are too proud to ſtoop to diſcharge them. On this diſagreeable topic I mean to give you a little reſpite, intending, however, to reſume it in another point of view before we part, and referring my readers for more intelligence in theſe matters

matters to the Confeſſional, and to Dr. Prieſtley's familiar Letters to the inhabitants of Birmingham, and to his Letters to Mr. Burke.

" To the weak argument againſt the Trinity, " drawn from its incomprehenſibility, or in other " words from the incapacity of the mind to form " any repreſentation or phantaſm of it," we have it confirmed by all the weight of your authority, " that nothing ſtronger can be oppoſed than the " equal incomprehenſibility of the Unity."* By the pompous words *repreſentation* and *phantaſm*, I take it you mean the ſame thing that I ſhould expreſs by the term *idea*. If you allow, as you ſeem to do, the incapacity of the mind to form an *idea* of the Trinity, the doctrine as an object of faith is gone for ever. On this hinge let the queſtion hang, and there can be no doubt as to the ſide to which the judgment of the impartial will incline. The thinking part of mankind have now, for a long time, I believe, been in the habit of acquieſcing in Mr. Locke's poſition, that where we want ideas, we want knowledge of all kinds; therefore to give aſſent to, or to believe a propoſition, of which we have no ideas, or (which is the ſame thing) of which we have no knowledge, muſt be left to ſuch profound theologues as yourſelf, and will not, I imagine, be attempted by perſons of ordinary underſtandings. But perhaps this philoſopher's mechanical way of appreciating degrees of aſſent, you

* Vide note F.

may

may deſpiſe. Having, like your Prelate, ſounded the profundities of Platoniſm, having been illumined by the contemplations of the ſage himſelf, and farther inſtructed by the *ſober diſquiſitions* of his followers, you may teach us how faith may be exerciſed without any knowledge of its object,—a piece of ſervice much needed, and which your ſide of the queſtion, on the point before us, ſeems to require, in order to be defended. For a diſſertation on this ſubject, your admirable knack at clear reaſoning, and perſpicuous writing, eminently qualify you; I therefore recommend to you the undertaking.

Though it be allowed on all hands that the divine nature is incomprehenſible, ſtill we ſtrenuouſly contend for the power of examining your repreſentations of it, and the propoſitions you maintain reſpecting it; for the right of determining each for himſelf whether they be conſiſtent or contradictory, whether your arguments in ſupport of them be fair and well-founded, or fallacious and ſophiſtical: we likewiſe claim the privilege of comparing your notions on the ſubject, with thoſe that are held by others. If with one breath you tell us, that there is one God, and with the next, that the Father, one diſtinct perſon, is God; that the Son, another diſtinct perſon, is God; and ſuperadd a third diſtinct perſon, who alſo is God, and that theſe three are equal; but that by an ineffable union they are one, in the ſtrict ſenſe of the word, we regard you as dealers

dealers in jargon, as vending a commodity which, in barbarous times, would have procured you reſpect and admiration, but which, in an enlightened age, only expoſes you to ridicule and contempt. While the whole tenor of the Old and New Teſtament is in ſupport of the divine Unity, we will not be awed, by your clamour and hard appellations, to a ſurrender of our reaſon, nor induced to acknowledge, beſides the one God and Father of all, two other objects of religious adoration.

Unitarians are often repreſented as being influenced in their rejection of the Trinity by the pride of reaſon, and a contempt for revelation; whereas the fact is, that we reject this doctrine becauſe we think we can demonſtrate it to be as hoſtile to Scripture* as it is to reaſon. This goodly doctrine we believe to have been fabricated by thoſe who had been educated in the ſchools, to which we owe the notions of occult qualities and intelligible forms, and introduced into the Chriſtian Church, together with a torrent of other abſurdities, in a degenerate age, when a rage for deifying prevailed; when not only the Saviour of mankind was raiſed to the rank of a God, but his Mother, his Apoſtles, and a legion of Saints and Martyrs, were converted into objects of religious worſhip;—when theological doctors openly maintained ignorance to be the parent of devotion, and gloried in believing things becauſe they were impoſſible;—at a time when truth was

* Vide note G.

judged

judged not to have force ſufficient to make its way in the world, but was thought to require the friendly aid of pains and penalties, and privation of goods;—when St. Auguſtin, to whom we owe the doctrines of predeſtination and original ſin, in the ſhocking forms under which your Church maintains them; yes, ſir, when your admired St. Auguſtin, as good a Platoniſt as the Biſhop or yourſelf, and who confeſſed that he underſtood not the Trinity till he had ſtudied it in the ſchool of Plato, openly maintained the lawfulneſs of ſtripping heretics of their temporal poſſeſſions. If you would go ſtill farther back, to trace the origin of this doctrine to its remoter ſources, they will be found in the Oriental philoſophy, whence Plato derived his wiſdom; a philoſophy which held the divine nature to be prolific; that believed in two principles, the one good and the other evil; that maintained the incarnation of divinities, the pre-exiſtence and tranſmigration of ſouls, and all the opprobria of modern ſyſtems of divinity, which once exerciſed ſo dire a ſway over the human underſtanding, and which in part remain, as a cauſe of ſcandal and offence to our holy religion. While you maintain that this and ſuch like tenets conſtitute orthodoxy, we muſt remain ſubject to the charge of hereſy, under no apprehenſion that the obloquy of the term will prevent our numbers from increaſing, among thoſe who think and enquire.

The preſent purſuits of philoſophers ſeem to be not a little offenſive to you; and not without reaſon

truly; for theſe purſuits, while they are moſt favourable to true religion, make a dreadful havock within the confines of every ſyſtem of corrupt religion. When this world was believed to be the center of the univerſe, and the ſun, moon, planets, and fixed ſtars, daily to turn round it, and the race of man was deemed the only tribe of rational beings, except the inhabitants of the empyreal Heaven; then it would far leſs ſhock the mind to believe that the Creator ſhould become man, that he ſhould live and die for the benefit of his creatures. Even philoſophers, if any in this ſtate of things could deſerve the name, with notions ſo high of the importance of man, with views ſo low and unworthy of God, might with leſs difficulty admit this account; like the wiſeſt inhabitants of ſome ſolitary iſland, who, knowing of no other human beings beſides themſelves, might eaſily be brought to credit the tale, that the ſun and moon, which roſe and ſet only to ſupply them with light and warmth, did upon a time pay a viſit to their anceſtors, and render them eminent ſervices:—a tale this infinitely more credible than that which the orthodox Chriſtian believes. But modern phyſics place the mind on an elevation, which makes the abſurdity of the method of thus reſcuing man from miſery appear enormous, and the end propoſed, though weighty, infinitely leſs momentous. To me it is often matter of the greateſt wonder, and ſeems to require the greateſt poſſible ſketch of candour, to

believe

face againſt all that is liberal, againſt all improvements in our civil and in our eccleſiaſtical conſtitution, you will attempt in vain to excite, in the generous boſom, ſentiments of eſteem and reſpect.

Your reputation would not, perhaps, ſuffer by laviſhing praiſes on a controverſialiſt, who, inſtead of diſcuſſing with the perſon on whom he made his attack the grand points in debate, ſtudiouſly ſought to divertthe attention to leſſer matters; who, inſtead even of attempting to anſwer his arguments, ſet himſelf on magnifying a few trivial miſtakes; who, inſtead of overthrowing his poſitions, ſtrove by the confidence of histone, and the loudneſs of his vociferation, to cry down his opponent as incompetent; who, to defend the doctrines of which he ſet himſelf up the champion, was conſtrained to have recourſe to a juſtly exploded ſyſtem of metaphyſics; who, to counterbalance the credit which his adverſary had by a *few lucky experiments* acquired, gave it out that he underſtood what men who have given proofs of profound erudition have pronounced unintelligible, and repreſented himſelf as converſant with the reveries of ſpeculatiſts, whoſe argumentation, when in any degree intelligible, is a burleſque upon reaſoning.*

But in Plato's ſchool the Biſhop is a mere novice, a very tyro; the tranſlator of *Plotinus*, the modern advocate for the *ancient Polytheiſm*, muſt regard him as a boaſting ſmatterer, pluming himſelf on an

* Vide note H.

acquaintance

acquaintance with the divine philoſophy which he profeſſes, while in reality he is the votary of a modern barbariſm.

Auguſtine, Petrarch, and Biſhop Horſley, ſtudying in this ſchool, have been confirmed in the Trinitarian doctrine; they learnt here to conceive more readily of there being three divine perſons, each of whom is God. Mr. *Taylor*, a harder ſtudent in the ſame ſchool, has found out that there are divine perſons, or Gods, to the number of ſeveral thouſands. He is ſhocked at the unworthy ideas of the Deity entertained by the Biſhop and thoſe of his perſuaſion, who make the godhead ſo barren, as to have produced only two divinities; while on his ſyſtem the glorious perfection of being prolific is rendered illuſtrious, by the production of a numberleſs race of divinities. In this ſchool, this man has learnt, not only the doctrine of many gods, but the pre-exiſtence and tranſmigration of ſouls, to aſpire after the converſe of genii, and of other ſuperior beings, to diſcern the truth of the Ptolemaic ſyſtem, and like you the folly and inutility of experimental philoſophy, which Lord Bacon took ſo much pains to recommend. Hence, when natural philoſophy is calumniated as unfriendly to right ſentiments in religion, let it be remembered that the philoſophy, the ſtudy of which Dr. Horſley has ſet himſelf ſo induſtriouſly to recommend, has led one, who has ſtudied it with the moſt diligence, into the profeſſion of idolatry, ſuch as was eſta-

bliſhed

bliſhed in antient Greece, to acknowledge the divinity of Jupiter, Juno, &c. Whenever the philoſophy which arrives at general principles by induction from particulars, is accuſed of favouring hereſy, let it be remembered that the boaſted ſcience of univerſals, the ſcience of ſuperior minds, which opens men's eyes to their own ignorance, and diſpoſes them to be orthodox, leads to *paganiſm*, and has actually made (ſhocking to tell!) one of the moſt famed of its modern votaries an avowed idolater. It would ſeem then that we cannot be Trinitarians on Biſhop Horſley's principles, but at the extreme hazard of being pagans.

I admire the daring policy apparent in our Prelate's attempts to render faſhionable the Platonic philoſophy; while I am confident, that, by the good ſenſe of this age, they will be treated with the ſcorn and contempt they deſerve. For were a rage for Platoniſm to revive, the world would again be filled with ſprights and ghoſts; noxious caverns would again be inhabited by dæmons; fountains, and rivers, and groves, would have their preſiding divinities; and the empire of the prieſts would return.

I would obſerve one thing more as to the Biſhop, and I have done with him. Being the enemy of intellectual freedom, it became him to ſtand up as the advocate of civil oppreſſion. To treat the rights of two millions of his fellow-ſubjects with unfeeling levity, to mention their hardſhips with malignant

ſatisfaction, was conſiſtent with his character for political wiſdom, and the wonted generoſity of his mind. Really, ſir, the *Review of the Diſſenters' Caſe* outdoes, in taunt and inſult, all the former productions of his pen. Report ſays, that for this he is ſoon to be called to an account, by one who will not trifle with him. If you, ſir, are poſſeſſed of that *generoſity* which you profeſs, recommend this publication to thoſe of your neighbourhood, whoſe minds have been ſoured by the Biſhop's ſophiſtical and bigotted declamation.

May you, ſir, enjoy all the ſatisfaction which your attachment to this ghoſtly father of your's is calculated to afford; continue to be his enraptured admirer; may you be his leſs humble imitator and his more ſtout defender, than you have ſhewn yourſelf to be in the letter before us; and all the pleaſing reflections, which the greateſt ſucceſs in this way can give, you will enjoy unenvied by your preſent correſpondent. My lot it has been to direct my veneration to a perſon of a very different character; to be inſtrumental, in the moſt inconſiderable degree, in promoting whoſe deſigns, of ridding the world of ſuperſtition and error, is the greateſt happineſs after which I aſpire. For this reaſon, and not on account of any apprehenſion I feel, that the reflections, which have been ſo induſtriouſly thrown out againſt this illuſtrious perſon, can in the leaſt hurt him, it is that I am ſolicitous my readers ſhould know how unfounded they are, and

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the motives whence they have originated; that they may not be influenced by them, to neglect deriving from his works the light and improvement, which they are in ſo ſuperior a degree calculated to communicate. For the benefit therefore of perſons, who in this matter may have been miſinformed, I ſhall beg leave to ſubjoin a quotation from a very able writer of the preſent age, who, ſpeaking of Dr. Prieſtley, thus expreſſes himſelf:—,

" It is with pleaſure I embrace this opportunity " of doing juſtice to the character of a man who " deſerves well of his country. I am perſuaded, " though he has been treated as an hereſiarch, and " an innovating, reſtleſs ſectary, there is not a " body of learned men in the world, except one, " who would not cheerfully acknowledge him for " a brother and a companion."

" So far from confining his views to the narrow " line of polemical divinity, there is ſcarce any " branch of literature which he hath not ſucceſs- " fully cultivated and improved."

" He is one of thoſe few men who do not advance " new doctrines with a view to ſurpriſe the igno- " rant, or to acquire a character of uncommon " penetration. The inveſtigation of real and uſe- " ful knowledge and truth, is his favourite object, " and the diſcovery of them his reward."

" He thinks freely, and ſpeaks and writes as " freely as he thinks; following no authority, a ſlave

" to no ſyſtem, he ranges uncontrouled by preju-
" dice, fear, or intereſt."

" Though he has had many difficulties and ene-
" mies to ſtruggle with, he was as ſteady in main-
" taining his principles when his ſubſtance was
" precarious, as ſince the encouragement of the
" public, and the patronage of a noble Lord, whoſe
" diſcernment of merit will not be diſputed, have
" made him independent. Cicero thought it his
" duty to ſhew the people the abſurdities of the
" pagan religion; and Dr. Prieſtley has reſcued
" Chriſtianity from thoſe groſs errors and myſte-
" rious abſurdities by which it has been long
" obſcured and diſgraced, and reconciled it to ſenſe
" and reaſon, and thoſe fixed principles, in which
" the liberal and intelligent part of mankind muſt
" always agree."

" It is with him an invariable maxim, that truth
" happineſs, and virtue, always mutually aſſiſt and
" ſupport each other; and that ignorance, folly
" ſuperſtition, and vice, are inſeparably connected
" together. He looks upon it as the greateſt ſole-
" ciſm, that Heaven ſhould have given us menta
" faculties only to be ſuppreſſed, or that any bene
" fit can ariſe to ſociety from limiting them b
" ſecular laws and ordinances. He is the enem
" of all pious frauds and religious errors, howeve
" dignified by authority, or rendered ſacred b
" antiquity, being perſuaded that mankind will b
" virtuous in proportion to the enlargement of thei

" idea

" ideas, and the rectitude of their judgment; there-
" fore he is not ſolicitous, in his purſuit of truth,
" what prejudices he may ſhock, what ſyſtem he
" may overturn, or whoſe territories he may in-
" vade. He may, perhaps, expreſs his mind more
" openly than timorous and delicate men would
" chuſe; but as long as there are the ſame means
" of defending, as there are to attack, it would be
" an ill compliment to any doctrines of reaſon and
" religion, to ſuppoſe they could ſuffer by honeſty
" and plain dealing."

" He has paid the tax of cenſure, which is gene-
" rally levied upon thoſe who dare to think for
" themſelves; but though he has met with more
" inſult and abuſe than moſt men in the preſent
" day, I am perſuaded he would not diſarm his
" enemies even of the liberty of aſperſing him. While
" his moral character remains unimpeached, he is
" content with every other reproach, and he thinks
" the approbation of the candid and deſerving an
" ample recompence;—with them one genuine
" virtue of the heart will atone for a thouſand miſ-
" takes of judgment. But bigots have no tender-
" neſs, no feeling; the want of faith is never to be
" redeemed; a ſcruple, a doubt fixes upon the moſt
" blameleſs life irretrievable reprobation. If the
" Doctor has called in queſtion popular opinions
" without grounds, he will be the more eaſily
" refuted. But, let him not be ſilenced whether
" right or wrong; there can be no policy in reſtrain-

" ing the progreſs of knowledge, unleſs it can be " proved, that we have arrived at the ſummit of " perfection, and that all farther improvements " are to be deſpaired of." Vide two Letters to the Prelates, printed for Johnſon, A. D. 1773.

So far is he from being " the great propagator " of anarchy" and confuſion, as you repreſent him, that no man has diſcourſed with happier ſucceſs on government and order, and ſhewn, in a clearer light, the impolicy of civil and eccleſiaſtical oppreſſion. Indeed, ſir, whatever be the ſubject upon which he treats, he is moſt careful of treading on the ground of ſure principles and indubitable facts. Hence it is, that in the numerous conteſts, into which, by his intrepid love of truth, he has been drawn, his victories have been ſo ſignal. But his ſuperior talents raiſe him leſs in the opinion of his friends, than his active virtues and amiable manners. He, to the ſatisfaction of having rendered unparalelled ſervices to the cauſe of ſcience, and of having raiſed higher the condition of his fellow-creatures by deſtroying their prejudices, and teaching them to follow, in their moſt important concerns, the deductions of reaſon, adds that of diſcharging the duties of his private ſtation in a manner truly exemplary, and with a degree of ſucceſs worthy of his exertions. Much as I admire him, honourable as I think it to bear openly my teſtimony to his merits, yet, ſir, if you conclude that I think myſelf obliged to adopt all his opinions, or

that

that I do actually agree with him in every particular, you will do me injuſtice. The moſt able and ſucceſsful authors I regard only as guides; and the greateſt among them I conſider as entitled to the praiſe, not of being perfect, but to that of being leſs fallible than his brethren.

" You are likely," you tell us, " to tranſmit " your faith and your Church unimpaired to your " children." If you mean that it will go down unaltered to your immediate deſcendants, no one will, I believe, care to diſpute the point with you. But you muſt mean more than this, for you take care to aſſure us, " that this is the only age in which " we can be heard;" and if that be the caſe, the Church will go down unimpaired, not only to your children, but to your lateſt poſterity. You would have done well to have informed us, what there is in this Church to exempt it from the fate of other human inſtitutions. The public mind, I apprehend, ſtands in need of information of this nature. An opinion very different from that which you entertain is gaining ground. All cannot bring their minds to admit the ſtability of a Church, the heads of which have their time and attention taken up in the lay-adminiſtration of the kingdom, to the utter neglect of their ſpiritual charge; moſt of the dignified and many of the beneficed Clergy of which are equally chargeable with profeſſional delinquency; while in the major part of its officiating miniſters, there is a notorious neglect of duty or an

incapacity

incapacity for its diſcharge. It appears to me highly unreaſonable to preſume on the permanency of a Church, the doctrines of which are the *credenda* of an unenlightened age, juſt emerging from Popery; a ſeaſon of all others the moſt unfit for conſtructing articles, to determine the faith of all future ages, even if this buſineſs were allowable for fallible man, in any ſituation, to undertake; of a Church which in its offices —— the Deity, and damns all men who reject its dogmas;* a Church which holds up four objects of religious worſhip; which abſolves the moſt profligate of all their ſins, in the hour of ſickneſs, though there be no ſpace for repentance; which returns thanks to Almighty God, for having taken thoſe to himſelf, who on earth were admitted into no good ſociety; which diſpenſes, by its Prelates, the Holy Ghoſt to all who receive holy orders, though many of them are at the time known to be extremely vicious and diſſolute; and which transfuſes, through the fingers of theſe ghoſtly fathers, what in an inſtant makes good Chriſtians of the vileſt of the community. To believe that a Church, the adminiſtration of which is thus corrupt, the doctrines and rites of which are thus abſurd and irrational, and moreover ſo immoral in their tendency, is ſecure of laſting continuance, would require a faith of the ſame nature with that which you poſſeſs. The attacks of enthuſiaſm on one ſide, and of reaſon on the other; the growing infidelity among the higher ranks of the com-

* Vide note I.

munity;

munity; the changes to which, the increaſe of corruption and of our national debt, muſt at ſome future period give riſe; the examples of correcting abuſes given us by our neighbours; the zeal and diligence of its enemies, their abilities, and above all the ſuperior goodneſs of their cauſe; certainly wear the aſpect of danger, and muſt alarm the conſiderate friends of the Church. You, however, ſeem confident. Your confidence, if feigned, is politic; but it may be real; inſtances of it, equally unreaſonable, are not unfrequently to be met with. Though the advancement of natural ſcience had made it highly fit, and therefore extremely probable, that our Pharmacopeia ſhould undergo a reviſion, yet I dare engage that many a country apothecary might have been found, ſome years back, who believed it to be as little ſuſceptible of improvement, and as little likely to undergo any alteration, as you may deem our forms of public worſhip. Equally confident, I doubt not, were the zealots of the Romiſh religion, in the days of Leo the tenth, that the power and authority of their Church would be tranſmitted down undiminiſhed to the lateſt times. And a very little time back, the Clergy of France were as free from apprehenſions as to the ſecurity of their revenues, as their brethren of Britain and Ireland are at this day with reſpect to theirs. But human affairs we ſee are unſtable; they ever change from worſe to better, or from better to worſe; though ultimately every change is for the better. With this

this view of things, I ſhall indulge, in my dream, that we are advancing towards the abolition of all ſlaviſh hierarchies and uſurping eſtabliſhments; ſlowly it may be, but ſurely and inevitably. How near, or how remote the period is, in which this will happen, I pretend not to predict; nor, as a friend to truth, do I hope for its too ſpeedy arrival, though the ſufferings of conſcientious individuals would dictate a different wiſh. Regarded in a public view, the downfal of a reigning ſuperſtition may happen too ſoon, before the public are ripe for ſuch an event; and by reaſon of this unpreparedneſs another ſuperſtition may be ſet up, though one ſomewhat leſs obnoxious, and thereby our condition be little improved; whereas no danger can attend its happening late, provided that in the mean time the friends of truth and free-enquiry are no remiſs; the longer it is before this is brought about the more ſolid and extenſive the benefits that may be expected.

I cannot be brought to believe, that the advantages we enjoy, in being able to contemplate religion free from the prejudices which a Popiſh education muſt have formed; to examine the Scriptures by the rules of an improved criticiſm, and in the light which a more accurate knowledge of the countries in which took place the tranſactions they relate, and of the cuſtoms and manners to which they allude, reflect on the ſacred volume; nor yet that the aids we derive from the labours of thoſe learned

learned perſons, who have been at immenſe pains to trace the additions which Chriſtianity received from Platoniſm, from the ſubtilties of the Ariſtotelian philoſophy, and from the extravagancies of the Oriental wiſdom, whether borrowed from their original ſources, or taken up after they had been incorporated with the ancient hereſies; I cannot be brought to believe that theſe advantages will always anſwer no other end, than to benefit a few curious minds, and have no beneficial effect upon the public profeſſion of religion. Yea, ſir, I cannot help abiding in this perſuaſion, while I remain convinced that truth is of more value than error; that mankind have an irreſiſtible propenſity to prefer the one, and to ſhun the other; that the former elevates the mind, while the latter debaſes our nobleſt powers. The expectation is rendered more ſtrong, when it is conſidered, that there are and ever will be men of enlarged views, who can ſoar above the allurements of eaſe, the charms of worldly greatneſs, and the inſipid applauſes of the great and low vulgar; who will act with diligence and vigour, in promoting the intereſts of truth, and in expoſing all that is not found, animated by the conſciouſneſs, that in ſo doing they act in concurrence, moſt effectually and eminently, with the benignant Author of their being, and cheered by the hope that at ſome time or other, the cauſe they have moſt at heart will have a glorious and ſplendid triumph.—The perfections of the Deity, the author and guardian

dian of truth, juſtify the hope, and warrant the expectation. The ſpirit of enquiry is abroad in the world: vain and ridiculous will be every attempt to ſuppreſs its career: to this no ſtop can be put till its laſt demands are ſatisfied. Truth, when once ſhe has been made an object of attention, poſſeſſes advantages, which, in ſpite of all the difficulties with which ſhe may have to ſtruggle, and of the ties and holds by which error would retain her dominion, muſt render her finally victorious, and draw after her univerſal preference.

Theſe ſpeculations are, I think, founded in the principles of human nature, agreeable to the uſual courſe of things, and greatly corroborated by preſent appearances. To indulge in them affords a ſatisfaction and a delight which it is impoſſible to enjoy with your notions; and nothing that you have written has ſhaken in the leaſt my confidence in them. Indeed the writings and the converſation of the ableſt of your party, only ſerve to impreſs my mind more ſtrongly with the excellence of the cauſe which you attack, and of the badneſs of that which you are obliged to defend.

Immoderate as is the ſize into which this letter has ſwoln, under my hands, I cannot diſmiſs, without farther notice, an extraordinary paſſage in your Letter. It has been already quoted. It is that in which you inform us, "this is the only age in which we can be heard." This poſition proves your regard for truth to be very faint, your head to be very weak, or "your

"intercourſe

« intercourſe with your ſpecies to be very limited." Had you favoured us with the reaſons on which you built this concluſion, which you ſport ſo confidently, you probably would have afforded us entertainment. How came you, ſir, to think that enquiry would ſoon be at an end; that every paſſion of this kind would ſhortly be for ever ſtifled; that the undiſturbed and univerſal empire of ſuperſtition was about to commence; and that the maxims of intolerance would be ſpeedily revived; that the bulk of the people of Britain will ſoon, to a man, unite in regarding the thirty-nine articles as of equal authority with holy writ, as indiſputable as the axioms of Euclid, or the Newtonian laws of philoſophiſing; that the prejudice againſt the Athanaſian Creed will ſoon be done away, and that this celebrated formula will be cordially ſubſcribed by all the faithful? If you cheriſh expectations ſuch as theſe, and are anxious not to be deprived of the ſatisfaction they yield, I would adviſe you by all means againſt extending *your intercourſe with your ſpecies*, and to fence yourſelf carefully within your *little field*, leſt you ſhould diſcover how matters really ſtand, and the illuſion ſhould entirely vaniſh. Leaving you to purſue theſe reflections, having no deſire you ſhould be thrown into that ſtate into which you fancied your Letter had reduced me; and, judging myſelf inexcuſable, ſhould I not, when I have it in my power, relieve you from the pain, to which your idea of my ſituation, muſt expoſe

a perſon of your tender feelings, I will, ſir, honeſtly thank you for a conſiderable degree of amuſement, for being ſet on a train of reflections that I conſider as very uſeful and pleaſing, and, I would truſt, for ſomething of more conſequence, for an opportunity of exciting, in ſome of my countrymen, a love of enquiry, and a thirſt after a juſt and rational knowledge of religion, the moſt momentous of all concerns, and that in which, of all others, it is moſt important that we ſhould be ſet right.

Now, ſir, if it muſt be ſo, farewell "for ever!" And is then your reſolution abſolutely fixed? Yes, unalterably fixed. "My arm is too weak," you ſay. But what if my muſcles ſhould acquire hardneſs by art and exerciſe? for art and exerciſe, you know, can do wonders. What if I ſhould poliſh my weapon, and I ſhould be induced once more to appear in the amphitheatre, may I not hope that you will again ſuffer yourſelf to be turned out againſt me, to put my ſkill and courage to the proof? No, you are reſolved to refuſe. Really, ſir, you act wiſely. A greater proof of your wiſdom it would, have been, perhaps, never to have appeared in the field at all. Adieu then, ſir, finally! Neither your talents, your acquirements, or your temper, will cauſe any to regret your declining any farther conteſt. Your reaſons are evident. You calculate, I doubt not, rightly, that at no ſeaſon can you retire more honourably than at the preſent. Should you, however

ever, be by any means led to change your reſolution, remember that I am in no wiſe obliged to notice you. My object is anſwered. I have hinted at the ſubjects to which I wiſhed to direct the attention of my countrymen; and I have referred to the writers by whom they are amply diſcuſſed. I flatter myſelf, likewiſe, that owing to my interference, feeble as it may have been, the voice of detraction in theſe parts againſt Unitarianiſm will be rendered leſs loud, and miſrepreſentations leſs current; that the impartial and well-diſpoſed will heſitate before they give their aſſent to them, and forbear to cenſure till they have examined.

I am,

Reverend Sir,

Your very humble Servant,

A WELSH FREEHOLDER.

POSTSCRIPT.

THE *Welſh Freeholder* is confident, that his readers will not be diſpleaſed with the inſertion of the following ſhrewd Letter, which he has received from an anonymous correſpondent. He feels the utmoſt ſatisfaction, in having his conduct and views approved and ſanctioned by ſo able and learned a perſon, as he conceives the writer of the Letter before him to be. On its merits it would hardly be proper in him to enlarge; of theſe, after a fair peruſal, let the reader judge.

" Sir,

" AS a friend to free enquiry and rational reli-
" gion, I muſt beg the favour of being permitted
" to expreſs my gratitude, for your ſeaſonable
" exertion to ſtem the torrent of abſurdity and
" eccleſiaſtical power with which we are threatened
" Piteouſly worſted in the unequal conflict with
" Dr. P——, his Lordſhip probably rejoiced
" the thought, that the Welſh Biſhoprick, the
" reward of his diſtinguiſhed proweſs, would
" afford him an undiſturbed retreat; where he
" ſhould recover from his wounds, and have ſtill
" an opportunity of employing the remainder of
" his ſtrength, in attacking (like Αιας Μαςιγοφορος
" the feeble and unreſiſting Diſſenters of Wales
" Eaſy he might think would be the conquest
" Herein you muſt have convinced him of his
" miſtake

" miſtake. You, ſir, have abundantly proved that
" there are among us, who can detect plauſible
" pretences to ſuperior erudition, who can anſwer
" impoſing ſophiſms with ſubſtantial argument,
" who can treat 'great ſwelling words of vanity'
" with ſucceſsful ridicule, who can ſmile at the
" folly of eccleſiáſtical hauteur.

" It is a debt, ſir, you may juſtly expect to be
" paid by your diſſenting countrymen, to acknow-
" ledge their obligations for your interference.—
" The *manner* in which you have made this oppo-
" ſition diſcovers to me, that your ſentiments
" concerning this Prelate are in uniſon with my
" own, and with thoſe of many among my acquain-
" tance. The man who, in a theological contro-
" verſy with one of the greateſt characters of the
" age, avows his determination 'to ſtrike at his
" adverſary without remorſe;'—who unbluſhingly
" profeſſes to deſtroy his opponent's 'credit, and
" the authority of his name,' by depreciating his
" character as a philoſopher, and affecting to cha-
" racteriſe, as merely 'certain lucky diſcoveries,'
" thoſe improvements in ſcience which for theſe
" laſt twenty years have attracted to this country the
" attention of all learned bodies in Europe;—who,
" becauſe a plain paſſage in hiſtory is irreconcile-
" able with his paradoxical aſſertions, does not
" ſcruple to conſider an illuſtrious ornament of an-
" tiquity as capable of 'wilful falſehood' and per-
" jury, nor to repreſent a ſimilar ornament of mo-

" dern times, who undertook to defend the venerable
" *Origen*, in the ſame defamatory language;—who
" can ſtain his character as a miniſter of 'the pure
" and undefiled religion' of the goſpel, by dabbling
" in the turbid waters of election politics;—the
" man, I ſay, who anſwers to this deſcription, what
" perſon of honour and generoſity can contemplate
" without *indignation?* But when this man is
" viewed in a different light, as betraying the
" extreme of incompetence, where he diſcovers
" the extreme of confidence,—as pompouſly ana-
" lyſing the opinions of an author, (viz. Zuicker)
" whom probably he had never read, and which
" opinions the author is found not to contain,—as
" gravely maintaining, that a Father may beget a
" Son by the contemplation of his own powers,—
" as attempting to ſilence the cavils of ſcepticiſm,
" by the obſtinacy and violence of his aſſevera-
" tions,—and as rendering theſe and other abſur-
" dities conſpicuous by the eminence of his ſitua-
" tion,—our *indignation* will be ſoftened into a
" *ſmile*; and the complex emotion excited by the
" whole of his character will be rather pleaſurable
" than painful.

" Such, ſir, ſeems to have been the emotion,
" under the influence of which you wrote the Let-
" ter of the *Welſh Freeholder*. You have indeed
" treated me and my friends with conſiderable
" entertainment. And why ſhould we not thus
" divert ourſelves? Our cheerfulneſs certainly is

" innocent

« innocent. The Biſhop's friends however tell us « —'that you diſcover an unchriſtian ſpirit.' But « ſurely it is not inconſiſtent with Chriſtianity to « ridicule affectation, intolerance, and abſurdity; « and this is all that you have done. Let them « triumph, that their 'religion lifts up its mitred « head in Courts and Parliaments.' Let them « content themſelves with the enjoyment of thoſe « honours and emoluments, civil and eccleſiaſtical, « from which we are injuriouſly excluded. But, « oh! let them not deprive us of our laſt conſolation « in this ſtate of *hopeleſs* depreſſion! Let them not « inſiſt upon it, that, like the captive Hebrews, « at the waters of Babylon, we hang our *harps* upon « the willows, ſit down and weep! Let them not « deny us that amuſement, which has long ſolaced « us under oppreſſion, and in ſome meaſure recon- « ciled us to it, viz. laughing at the follies of our « oppreſſors!

« Without doubt, ſir, you have read the Letter of « the indignant Clergyman. To allude to a curi- « ous expreſſion of his own, his object ſeems to be, « *to drown you with the vapour of his mouth*;' but « take comfort, it cannot '*taint the atmoſphere in « which you breathe.*' If you honour this Rhapſo- « diſt with a reply, he has dreſſed himſelf ready « for your entertainment in his conical cap and « feather, and his coat of many colours. Some « ſtrictures upon his pamphlet may counteract the « effects of his bold declamatory manner. Though

it may be ſaid juſtly of him, and likewiſe of his " dioceſan ἰδίωτης μὲν ἐν φιλοσόφοις, yet the other " part of the ſentence may be equally applicable, " φιλοσόφος δε ἐν ἰδίωῃαις.

" Allow me, ſir, to requeſt you would go on in " your laudable attempts to enlighten the minds of " your countrymen. Your perſeverance, joined " with the indiſcretion, intolerance and zeal of the " Biſhop of St. David's, may, under the bleſſing " of Providence, be the means of exciting a ſpirit " of enquiry among us, and conſequently of acce- " lerating our defection from this antichriſtian " eſtabliſhment, which is gradually falling into " diſrepute.

" Hoping you will excuſe the liberty I have " taken, in thus expreſſing my ſentiments,

" I am,

" Sir,

" With unfeigned eſteem,

" Your obliged Countryman,

" Feb. 3d, 1791. X. Y. Z.

NOTE

NOTES.

(A) Surely our Clergyman muſt be an animal magnetiſt, and when he wrote this muſt have been thrown into the luminous criſis.

(B) —— ſævitque animis ignobile vulgus;
Jamque faces et ſaxa volant; furor arma miniſtrat.

Does it not ſeem, from the temper of this pious man, that there are Clergy in our times, and in our own country, to whom it would not be diſagreeable to have the ſame games played with heretics, as in former days? But perhaps I may be doing our Clergyman wrong, and that, like many a harmleſs ſcold, all his malice finds vent at his tongue, and he would not, with his hand, hurt a ſingle hair of your head.

(C) Our Clergyman cannot here allude to the late rejection of Mr. Cooper by the ſociety, for he is an "*artificer* of experiments," an improver of ſuch low things as our manufactures, and therefore he could not be diſpleaſed with that meaſure.—He muſt then either refer to the offence taken by a very eminent mathematician againſt the Royal Society, in which he was juſtified by many of his aſſociates in the ſame ſtudies, but in which affair, from Dr.

Kippis's account, which has never yet publickly been called in queſtion, it appears the ſociety was not chargeable with blame. Or he muſt have in view the revolution which of late years has taken place in the ſtudies of philoſophers; a revolution that may be diſpleaſing to pedants, but in which every enlightened perſon muſt rejoice; as having already been productive, and likely to become ſtill more ſo, of the moſt important benefits to mankind. The philoſophy which analyſes the air we breathe, the materials of which our bodies are formed, thoſe by which they are ſupported, by which our diſorders are healed; which explains the innumerable proceſſes that nature is every moment conducting before our eyes, and in which we are very materially intereſted; the philoſophy, in which have laboured the Bacons, Boyle, Hales, Bergman, Prieſtley, and Cavendiſh, is of more immediate and general importance, than the ſublime re-ſearches (though theſe are invaluable, and never ſufficiently to be prized) which engaged the attention of the philoſophers who flouriſhed in the laſt and in the beginning of the preſent century.

(D) How the Clergy are ſometimes *put upon*, we learn from a good ſtory told by Dr. Prieſtley, in his *Letters to Mr. Burke*:—

" When the Diſſenting Miniſters waited, by
" appointment, upon an Archbiſhop (Cornwallis)
" in order to get his vote and intereſt for relief in
" the

" the matter of ſubſcription, which was then under
" conſideration in parliament, after both himſelf
" and his brethren had voted againſt us on a former
" occaſion, he aſſured them, that though their
" bench had concurred in rejecting their applica-
" tion before, it was no meaſure of *their's*, but
" that they had been *put upon it.* On their expreſ-
" ſing ſome degree of ſurpriſe at this, he put his
" hand upon his breaſt, and ſaid again, 'upon
" my honour, we were put upon it.' This he
" evidently thought a ſufficient apology for his own
" conduct, and that of his brethren. So valid did
" this excuſe appear to him, that he had no feeling
" of the diſhonour which ſuch conduct reflected
" upon the whole bench, and what a deſpicable
" idea he was giving of himſelf, and of his bre-
" thren, to us Diſſenters, who are uſed to think and
" act for ourſelves, and are not to be *put upon* by
" others. Can ſuch conduct as this, which the
" ſituation of your dignified Clergy neceſſarily leads
" them into, inſpire perſons of high rank, or of
" any rank, with ſentiments of reſpect? I will
" venture to ſay, it is impoſſible. Pretend what
" you will, you muſt, and you do hold them in
" contempt, as much as we do ourſelves. It is the
" feeling of indignant honour. It is the natural
" ſentiment of man towards his degraded fellow-
" creature, which in ſome meaſure reflects diſho-
" nour upon himſelf, as being of the ſame ſpecies."

Vide Letter ix. p. 92, &c.

(E) Here

(E) Here it may not be improper to introduce, from the works of the late learned, virtuous, and amiable Doctor Jebb, a pleaſant quotation, which is worthy to be read as much on account of the juſtice of its remarks, as its exquiſite humour.

" Dr. Tucker, in the poſtulata on which he
" founds his " Apology for the Church of Eng-
" land," has puzzled me to ſome purpoſe. He
" aſſerts, that all ſocieties muſt have ſome com-
" mon ' center of union;' and that thoſe perſons,
" who propoſe themſelves to be candidates for
" offices and honourable diſtinctions, in any ſoci-
" ety, muſt be ſuppoſed to approve of its ' center
" of union,' in the main. " Center of union!"—
" What can be meant by a center of union?—I am
" puzzled, beyond meaſure, by this ſame center
" of union.

" I have looked into the thirty-nine articles,
" into the Athanaſian creed, but find no ' center of
" union' there; I have looked into the Canons of
" the Church, where I find many hard names,
" and many hard things, but no ' center of union'
" there. After much enquiry, I think I ſee ſome-
" thing that throws light upon the matter, in the
" fifth definition of the firſt book of Sir Iſaac
" Newton's Principia.

" I will therefore give the definition itſelf, and
" make ſuch remarks upon it as ſeem pertinent to
" the caſe in hand.

" Philo-

" Philoſophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica.

" Lib. i. definitio v.

" Vis centripeta eſt vis, quâ corpora verſus punc-
" tum aliquod, tanquam ad 'centrum,' undique tra-
" huntur, impelluntur, vel utcunque tendunt:" *i. e.*

" The centripetal force is that force, whereby
" bodies are from every quarter drawn, impelled,
" or do any how tend to a point as to a 'center.'

" It is well known to philoſophers, and to ſuch
" I addreſs myſelf, that the principle of gravita-
" tion is that principle which binds together the
" various bodies which compoſe the ſolar ſyſtem;
" and that the point to which theſe bodies tend,
" and in which, were the projectile force to be
" deſtroyed, they would be all united, is placed
" in or near the ſun.

" The ſun is, therefore, juſtly eſteemed 'the
" center of union' in the ſolar ſyſtem.

" Let us now conſider the Eccleſiaſtical Syſtem,
" i. e. the ſyſtem of the modern Clergy, and ſee
" how far the compariſon will hold.

" The Court is the common 'center of union,'
" or of gravitation to this ſyſtem.

" The vis centripeta, or centripetal force, is the
" power of conferring Dr. Tucker's 'offices and
" honourable diſtinctions.'

" The Biſhops are the larger bodies in this
" ſyſtem; ſome at greater, ſome at leſſer diſtances,

" per-

" perpetually revolving round their ſun, rejoicing,
" as they roll, in the heat and radiance of the
" royal favour.

" The moons or ſatellites, in this ſyſtem, are
" their Lordſhips' chaplains and dependants.

" The Archbiſhops of Canterbury and York, like
" Jupiter and Saturn, mightily influence their
" inferior brethren.

" Mercury repreſents the Biſhop of Peterbo-
" rough; Mars, my Lord of Glouceſter; and the
" heavy, dull, phlegmatic Biſhop of ——— is
" repreſented by the earth.

" The comet of 1680 (let the Cambridge men
" beware of it) is the univerſity of Oxford; a few
" years ago in its aphelion, but now, with rapidity,
" deſcending to the ſun.

" The words 'undique trahuntur,' i. e. 'are
" drawn from all parts,' imply, that atheiſts and
" infidels, arminians, jacobites, and papiſts, are
" lured by Dr. Tucker's 'offices and honourable
" diſtinctions,' to enter into the Church.

" The word 'impelluntur,' i. e. 'are driven,'
" imports, that men are driven to ſubſcribe the
" thirty-nine articles by their parents or guardians,
" by their expectations of preferment, by their
" apprehenſions of ſtarving, &c. ſometimes, ſorely
" againſt their will, and, nine times in ten, in direct
" oppoſition to the repulſive power of their con-
" ſcience.

" And

" And laſtly, the words ' utcunque tendunt,' " i. e. ' any way tend,' ſignify, that it is conſi- " dered as a matter of very little conſequence, in " this univerſal gravitation towards Dr. Tucker's " offices and honourable diſtinctions,' what mea- " ſures a man takes to get his preferment, pro- " vided he ſucceeds at laſt.

" I think I have now diſcovered the ' center of " union,' which, according to Dr. Tucker, the " ſubſcribing members of the Church of England " approve of in the main.

" ACADEMICUS."

Vide Jebb's Works, vol. iii. p. 104, 108.

(F) The complacency with which our author alleges this argument of our modern champion, reminds one of a requeſt made by that zealous Clergyman *Shenkyn ap Rees* to Dr. Waterland, at honeſt Whiſton's trial.

See Cordial for Low Spirits, vol. iii.

(G) For a proof of this, I would refer my readers to Lardner's Letter on the Logos; his four ſermons;—to Dr. Prieſtley's familiar Illuſtration of ſeveral paſſages of Scripture;—and to Mr. Lindſey's anſwer to Robinſon. But a work I would recommend as moſt full and deciſive on this ſubject, is " The Scripture account of the Attributes and " Worſhip of God, and of the character and office " of Jeſus Chriſt, by Hopton Haynes, eſq;" lately republiſhed.

N. B. All

N. B. All theſe may be had of J. Johnſon, No. 72, St. Paul's Church-yard.

H) From this cenſure even the admired Plato is not to be exempted. The bewitching charms of his ſtyle will ever attract the attention of ſcholars and men of taſte, to his works, as models of elegant compoſition. But to conſult him on any point that requires ſolid reaſoning, would argue the want of a ſound mind; for in his diſquiſitions, inſtead of being guided by a cool and wary judgment, he commits himſelf to the government of an imagination that knew no reſtraint. If to trace effects to their true cauſes denominate the Philoſopher, he had no pretenſions to the name; but he was, it cannot be diſputed, the moſt pleaſant and ſkilful contriver of marvellous and ſublime fiction that ever lived.

(I) It is much to be lamented, that the ſpirit which our Clergyman diſcovered in his Letter has not rendered the following animated language of ~~the venerable~~ Dr. Jebb, leſs proper for him to read.

" Go now, preſumptuous Prieſt, go, preach the " doctrine of the Articles; a doctrine, in almoſt " every inſtance, oppoſite to the doctrine thou haſt " read." [viz. that of the Goſpel.] " The daring " ſpirit of infidelity ſhall accompany thy progreſs; " mitred corruption ſhall ſit enthroned beſide thee; " and every vice, which deforms our nature, ſhall " be found in thy retinue. Yet go on fearleſs in

" thy

" thy courſe. Inflated with pride, miſled by paſ-
" ſion, with hypocriſy for thy guide, in imitation
" of the worſt of popiſh ſaints; in oppoſition to
" the voice of reaſon and the goſpel, and in defiance
" of thy own convictions, denounce damnation,
" and fulminate the everlaſting terrors of avenging
" heaven, againſt all who ſhall dare to differ from
" the eſtabliſhed creed. Be the god of conſcience;
" penetrate the heart; be the advocate of intole-
" rance, the adverſary of every ſcheme of reforma-
" tion. Be the patron of each vice, the ſcourge of
" virtue, the enemy of thy country, the enemy of
" man. The wiſe man ſhall deſpiſe thee, the
" friend of human nature ſhall deteſt thee, but
" adminiſtration ſhall promote thee to great ho-
" nour, and the epiſcopal bench ſhall hail, with
" ſongs of gratulation, thy ſucceſs."

Vide Jebb's Works, vol. iii. p. 210.

FINIS.